



Missouri River

Characteristics

The original wild Missouri River was a braided river with many channels and chutes that constantly were changing. It had a relatively fast current that constantly stirred the bottom sands and eroded banks giving rise to the nickname of "Big Muddy." It is formed by the confluence of the Jefferson, Madison, and Gallatin Rivers near Three Forks, Montana, and flows over 2,400 miles to the Mississippi upstream from St. Louis. Bluffs of loess soils are prominent features rising 150-300 feet above the Missouri River Valley between Sioux City, Iowa, and St. Joseph, Missouri.

Engineering works for navigation reduced the channel area by 80 % and reduced its length by 32 miles. Over 1,000 jetties and wing dams which funneled water flow to form a single, narrow channel were built from 1940 to 1970 between Sioux City and Omaha (approximately 100 miles of river). Desoto Bend Lake was formed when that portion of the river was cut off. The banks of the Missouri are armored with riprap along Iowa's border.

Recreation

Boating, fishing, hiking, hunting, trapping, water skiing, camping, biking, wildlife observation and/or photography

What Lives Here?

The wild Missouri River valley was a highly diverse braided prairie stream with a complex of islands, aisle channels, and chutes. It was rich with bison, elk, deer, wild fowl, and small game when early Euro-American settlers arrived. Many fish species were found in abundance and bottomland forests provided wood for homes and heat. Much of the forest was cleared by settlers and later for

development and agriculture. Small mammals still and deer are found in remaining habitats in the river valley. Many fish populations have dwindled, but catfish, carp, paddlefish, and sauger still inhabit the river. Bottomland forest trees and wetland plants grow in remaining side channels, backwaters, and floodplain areas. Freshwater mussels, crayfish, amphibians, reptiles, and insects are found in remaining suitable habitat. The Missouri River is still a major migratory route for birds, including snow geese.

Organisms found in this CD:

banded killifish, bank swallow, beaver, belted kingfisher, big brown bat, bigmouth buffalo, bigmouth shiner, black bullhead, black crappie, blue catfish, bluegill, blue-winged teal, black willow, blue flag iris, blue skullcap, blue sucker, boneset, broadleaf arrowhead, brook silverside, bullfrog, bulrush, burbot, caddisfly, cattle egret, channel catfish, chara, chlorella, clearweed, cliff swallow, common carp, common cattail, Cope's gray treefrog, copepod, cottonwood, crane fly, crawling water beetle, creek chub, cricket frog, damselfly, deer fly, devil crayfish, diatoms, double-crested cormorant, dragonfly, duckweeds, earthworm, eastern pipistrelle, emerald shiner, euglena, evening bat, false map turtle, false nettle, fathead minnow, fingernailclams and peaclams, fisher spider, flat floater, flathead catfish, fog fruit, fox snake, fragile papershell, freshwater drum, freshwater shrimp, freshwater sponge, giant floater, giant water bug, gizzard shad, golden shiner, goldfish, gray treefrog, great blue heron, great blue lobelia, great egret, green heron, great plains toad, green sunfish, hooded merganser, horse fly, horsetail, hydra, killdeer, largemouth bass, leafy pondweed, least weasel, leech, left-handed snails, little brown bat, longnose gar, long-tailed weasel, mallard, mayfly, microcystis, midge, mink, mosquito, muskrat, northern leopard frog, northern pike, northern rough-winged swallow, northern water snake, Norway rat, operculate snails, orangespotted sunfish, paddlefish, pied-billed grebe, pink papershell, plains garter snake, plains leopard frog, planaria, prairie crayfish, predaceous diving beetle, protozoa, purple loosestrife, quillback, red-sided and eastern garter snakes, red-winged blackbird, red shiner, right-handed snails, river carpsucker, river otter, rusty crayfish, sandbar willow, sauger, scud, shortnose gar, shovelnose sturgeon, silver-haired bat, silver maple, smallmouth buffalo, smooth softshell turtle, snapping turtle, spiny softshell, spirogyra, spotted sandpiper, spotted touch-me-not, stonefly, straw-colored nutsedge, swamp sparrow, sycamore, tadpole madtom, tiger salamander, toad bug, tree swallow, virile crayfish, volvox, walleye, water boatman, water flea, water mites, water parsnip, water scavenger beetle, water scorpion, water smartweed, water strider, western chorus frog, western painted turtle, whirligig beetle, white amur, white bass, white crappie, white heelsplitter, white river crayfish, white sucker, wild millet, wood duck, Woodhouse's toad, yellow warbler, yellow-crowned night-heron

Locations in Iowa

The Missouri River forms Iowa's western border from Sioux City to the southern edge of the state.

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.